

## Jean Parisot de Valette



Jean Parisot de Valette was a French nobleman and 49th Grand Master of the Order of Malta, from 21 August 1557 to his death in 1568.

As a Knight Hospitaller, joining the order in the Langue de Provence, he fought with distinction against the Turks at Rhodes. As Grand Master, Valette became the Order's hero and most illustrious leader, commanding the resistance against the Ottomans at the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, sometimes regarded as one of the greatest sieges of all time.

The Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (Latin: *Ordo Fratrum Hospitalis Sancti Ioannis Hierosolymitani*), commonly known as the Knights Hospitaller, was a medieval and early modern Catholic military order. It was headquartered in the Kingdom of Jerusalem until 1291, on the island of Cyprus at Kolossi Castle from 1302 until 1310, on the island of Rhodes from 1310 until 1522, in Malta from 1530 until 1798 and at Saint Petersburg from 1799 until 1801.

La Valette was born into the noble La Valette family in Quercy, South-western France, which had been an important family in France for many generations, various members having participated in the Crusades. Jean Parisot's grandfather, Bernard de La Valette, was a Knight and King's Orderly, and his father Guillot was a Chevalier de France. Jean Parisot was a distant cousin (through their mutual ancestor Almaric, Seigneur de Parisot) of Jean Louis de Nogaret de La Valette, first Duke of Épernon.

Although his birth year is usually given as 1494, both chroniclers of the Great Siege of Malta, Francisco Balbi di Correggio and Hipolito Sans, say he was 67 at the time, thereby implying that he was born in 1498. In his history of the Order of St. John, the 18th-century historian Abbe Vertot (whose history is largely based on – but often contradicted – the earlier one of Giacomo Bosio) indicates that La Valette was indeed the same age as both Suleiman I and Kızıl Ahmedli Mustafa Pasha (the commander of the Ottoman land forces), which would mean that he was actually 70 years old at the time of the siege.